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SUBJECT: MEXICAN MILITARY CONTINUING TO ARREST LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS
IN NUEVO LEON

REF: MONTERREY 0213

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. In the last four weeks the Mexican military has stepped up their operations in Nuevo Leon resulting in high profile arrests of corrupt police officers and large seizures. While the military operations coincide with stronger rhetoric from President Calderon and there are allegations he is using the military for political gain, in Nuevo Leon recent polls show there has been no effect on the races in the upcoming July 5 elections. The string of military successes is supported by residents - especially the rounding up of dirty police officers - and is likely to continue. However, the attempted kidnapping of the Monterrey's Overseas Security Council (OSAC) President shows that the cartels are still able to flaunt their power in the region. End Summary.

Military Continues Clean Up of Local Police

¶2. (U) The Mexican military and federal police have entered a fourth week of raids of local police stations in Nuevo Leon. The military and federal police began arresting local police officers on June 1 based on payoff lists found during drug seizures the previous month. The raids have resulted in the arrests of nearly 100 police officers - including some high ranking officials (See Reftel). While some of the officers and almost of the police commanders have been released, pending an investigation, most remain in police custody awaiting formal charges. Of those still in custody, 25 claim they have been tortured by the military to providing confessions. A few of the officers did show visible signs of injuries and the claims are being investigated by the National Human Rights Commission.

¶3. (SBU) The largest daily newspaper, El Norte, reported that the military recovered another list with 300 names of an police officers during a June 23 raid on a safe house. However, Nuevo Leon's Secretary of Public Security denied the list existed in a June 24 statement. Unlike previous lists, El Norte reported the recent list contains names from the State of Nuevo Leon SWAT unit and ministerial police. If the new list does exist, it would be especially damaging as the ministerial police agency is the agency responsible for investigating drug related crimes, including the police officers arrested in previous raids.

Military Crackdown on the Cartels Not Limited to Narcotics

14. (SBU) On June 17, Mexican military forces arrested high ranking Gulf Cartel member Gabriel 'El Gaby' Ayala, also often referred to as the 'czar of pirated goods,' and 13 others in Monterrey. As part of the raid, the military closed down ten of Ayala's production sites and seized five tons worth of illegal music, movie and software discs. In addition to the sale of pirated goods, Ayala is reported to have earned nearly US\$2 million per month through extortion of local merchants. Previous raids of pirated goods conducted by local police officers often focused only on seizing illegal goods at the street level. This recent arrest underscores the direct link between drug trafficking organizations and pirated merchandise, and could be a positive sign the military will take on the ringleaders of IPR violations.

Public Support Strong - Military Action Apolitical

15. (U) The public remains supportive of the military's effort to clean up the local police forces, especially after a tense standoff on June 8 in the Monterrey suburb of San Nicolas between federal and local police forces. During the confrontation, local and federal police officers pointed guns at one another threatening to fire. No one was injured in the standoff but the images of the dueling police officers shocked a city already shaken by increasing drug violence. The following day, military forces began seizing the assault rifles and cellular phones of local police forces to prevent future altercations. The public supports the raids despite the news of potential human rights abuses against the arrested police

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officers. Trying to capture the popularity of the military, the local PAN political party has even proposed using military officers to lead local municipal police forces.

16. (SBU) With local and federal midterm elections only 10 days away, the increase in military operations and a sense of increasing violence has not had an impact on the electorate. The two major political parties, the PAN and PRI, will likely hold on to the same number of federal deputy seats as they currently hold (PAN 9 to the PRI's 6); the gubernatorial race remains too close to call as it has been for several months; and the control of the city halls of the largest towns in Nuevo Leon will not likely switch to different parties. The national 'vote none of the above' campaign which is capturing the frustration the public feels towards the political parties in some parts of Mexico has gained little traction in Nuevo Leon.

But Still Security is Lacking . . .

17. (SBU) Notwithstanding the military's achievements over the past month, much remains to be done. Emblematic is a recent incident from last week. Gulf Cartel members attempted to kidnap the regional head of security for the railroad company Kansas City Southern (KCS), Raul Falcon, on June 19. Falcon also serves as the president of the local chapter of OSAC. The likely captors attempted to surround Falcon at his office in Matamoros near the U.S. border but he was able to escape and flee to the United States. Falcon was responsible for the recent interdiction of two large drug shipments on KCS trains and this is the most likely motive for his kidnapping. Post RSO has spoken to Falcon since the kidnapping attempt and has

learned that he has resigned from his position at KCS. His current whereabouts are unknown.

18. (SBU) Comment. The Mexican military has clearly been more active in recent months and the offensive will likely continue based on strong public support. While the arrest of corrupt police officers is welcome news for the public, the arrests have demoralized the remaining police officers. The arrests have also caused a vacuum of leadership in the local police forces that has created additional uncertainty. This uncertainty will continue until the newly elected governor and local mayors take office on October 4 and are able to install their new law enforcement directors. End Comment.

WILLIAMSON